



Bantams

Sidney Allinson

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The Bantams tells the factual but well nigh incredible story of how the British and Canadian armies recruited over 50,000 short men to serve as front-line soldiers. Such Bantam battalions eventually numbered over twenty units in Britain, plus two battalions from Canada. The movement spread all over Britain, particularly the coal mining regions of Wales and Northern England, then to Canada, particularly among British immigrants there.

Canadian military historian Sidney Allinson's researches took him to Britain, Canada, the U.S., and the old battlefields of Flanders. He contacted over 300 survivors of the Bantams, to gather the many first-hand accounts of battle told in his book.

It reveals disturbing new information about battlefield executions by firing squads that was only recently released from British official records long held secret from the public. It adds even more poignancy to the story of how thousands of patriotic 'Bantams' -- not much taller than a rifle themselves -- well below the Army's 5ft 3in. minimum regulation height, flocked to the colors.

This book also describes the social conditions in Britain and Canada during the First World War. Patriotic fervor enabled many famed British regiments to recruit eager volunteers for bantam-designated battalions. English and Scottish Bantams fought along the Somme front, while Welsh Bantams helped win the Battle of Bourslon despite hideously large casualties.

In Canada, the 216th Bantam (Toronto) Battalion was recruited within a few weeks, and the 143rd B.C. Bantams was quickly raised on Vancouver Island. Soldiers from both these now-forgotten Canadian units served at Vimy Ridge and in other later battles.

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